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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the Illinois State Board of Higher Education adopted a comprehensive set of 32 policy statements designed to improve undergraduate education. The policies address the improvement of student preparation for, access to, and retention in colleges and universities; improvement of student achievement, scholarship, and general education during undergraduate education; the improvement of student transfer and program articulation among colleges and universities; and the improvement of policies, procedures, and conditions affecting faculty members in order to promote excellence in teaching. This report reviews the status of implementation of the policies in each of these four areas, as well as the statewide processes for their implementation. A chart is included that outlines the efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate education at entry, during the undergraduate experience, and at graduation. (GLR)

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Item #6
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ED 366 282

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION POLICIES: IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

In September 1990, the Board of Higher Education, on the recommendation of the reconvened Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education, adopted a comprehensive set of 32 policy statements designed to improve undergraduate education. The adoption of these policies affirmed the Board's commitment to improving the quality of undergraduate education as one of its highest priorities. The policies address four areas: the improvement of student preparation for, access to, and retention in colleges and universities; the improvement of student achievement, scholarship, and general education during undergraduate education; the improvement of student transfer and program articulation among colleges and universities; and the improvement of policies, procedures, and conditions affecting faculty members in order to promote excellence in teaching.

The purpose of this report is to review the status of implementation of the policies in each of these four areas, as well as the statewide processes for their implementation. As the following sections show, significant progress has been made at both the state and institutional levels in improving undergraduate education since the Board's initial efforts beginning in the late 1970s. The Board's continuous emphasis on undergraduate education improvement throughout the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s has served as the unifying force for other state priorities: improving minority students' chances for college success, strengthening school-college partnerships, and contributing to economic development through enhanced workforce preparation. Since their original adoption in 1986, the policies on improving undergraduate education have served, as well, as the foundation for program approval, grant allocations, and budget development. Most recently, the policies became a cornerstone in the Board's activities in the Priorities, Quality, and Productivity (P•Q•P) initiative.

Policy Framework

Since 1977, the Board of Higher Education has instituted a series of efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate education. Initially the Board's efforts focused on improving student preparation for college. Early efforts included a series of reports that led to adoption of a policy on remediation and a report for the Joint Education Committee on the status of student writing and coursework in composition. In 1983, the Board adopted the recommendations of its Committee on Higher Education and Economic Development, calling on colleges and universities to require for admission more coursework in mathematics and science, as well as communication skills.

Following two years of further study, the Board of Higher Education adopted high school course requirements for admission to public colleges and universities in 1985. Historically, colleges and universities combined information from different sources to admit applicants: High school grade point average, percentile ranking in the graduating class, entrance examination scores (ACT or SAT), and narrative statements (applicant essays and high school recommendations) were used as indicators of an applicant's academic achievement in order to predict potential success in the collegiate freshman year. To this historic combination of indicators, the Board's policy on admission added the satisfactory completion of a set of high school courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. In adopting the high school course requirements for admission, the Board intended to promote improved preparation by providing better information about what was expected of entering college students to high school students and their parents, teachers, and counselors. The Board's

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policy was subsequently enacted, with revisions, as Public Act 86-0954, with the requirements becoming effective in fall 1993.

After adopting its admission policy, the Board appointed a Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education to examine further other possible ways to improve undergraduate education. The Board and the Committee recognized that individual colleges and universities had long been monitoring student performance. For ten years, public colleges and universities have reviewed existing academic programs using measures of program need, cost, quality, and student outcomes; used review findings to make program improvements; and reported to the Board annually on the findings and improvements made. While this cyclical program review process resulted in improvements to academic programs (generally defined as "majors"), it did not adequately address the totality of the undergraduate educational experience: the general education component of the curriculum, the campus' climate for learning, and the services provided to assist students to succeed.

In September 1986, the Board adopted as policy the recommendations for improving undergraduate education submitted by the initial Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education. Three years later, in fall 1989, the Board reconvened the Committee to review implementation of the policies and to propose any needed modifications. In September 1990, the Board adopted the revised policies recommended by the reconvened Committee.

Together, the Board's policies on admission and on undergraduate education reflect the belief that quality improvement depends upon colleges and universities establishing and widely publicizing standards and expectations for student performance, assisting students in meeting the standards, and assessing student achievement of them at time of entry, during the collegiate experience, and at graduation. The Table presented at the end of the report illustrates the various Board of Higher Education and individual college and university efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate education.

The cumulative affect of the Board's policies on admission and undergraduate education has been to shift emphasis from an "input" to an "outcomes" model of quality assessment. The input model assesses quality primarily in terms of dollars spent, the presence or absence of various programs and facilities, faculty qualifications, the qualifications of entering students, and other institutional variables. Through its policies on undergraduate education, the Board has established goals for student learning, processes for assessing student achievement of the goals, and systems for monitoring improvements in student achievement, as well as improvements in undergraduate education within colleges and universities, as outcomes measures.

Student Preparation, Access, and Retention

In March 1992, the Board received a comprehensive report on the status of student preparation for and access to higher education in Illinois. The report, *Undergraduate Education: Access and Preparation*, examined trends in college admission and advanced placement test scores statewide and evidence of freshman performance in public universities. Then, in November 1992, the Board received a report describing the fall 1993 admission requirements adopted by each public university and community college in accordance with Public Act 86-0954. A copy of this report, *Fall 1993 Admission Requirements for Public Universities and Community Colleges*, was sent to all Illinois high school principals in January 1993, in keeping with the Board's intent of providing information on expectations to prospective college students and to high schools.

This past academic year, the focus of the annual public college and university reviews of undergraduate education has been on student preparation issues: regular and provisional admission standards; assessment of the basic skills of entering students; orientation and transition programs for new students; campus academic support services such as tutoring and skills laboratories, supplemental

sections, and study groups; and early outreach programs and partnerships with schools to improve student preparation. Community colleges and public universities currently are submitting summaries of their reviews of undergraduate education to the Board. The staff intends to incorporate information from these institutional reports, as well as available statewide data, into a comprehensive update on the status of student preparation for and access to higher education for presentation to the Board in spring 1994.

Student Achievement, Scholarship, and General Education

In January 1992, the Board received a comprehensive report on the implementation of the policies on student achievement, scholarship, and general education, entitled *Undergraduate Education: Learning and Teaching*. This report examined processes for assessing student achievement, curriculum reform, academic standards and scholarship, and support services provided to students as reported by the public universities and community colleges in their annual reviews of undergraduate education. Then, in October 1992, the Board received a report entitled *Baccalaureate Student Graduation Rates and Time to Degree at Illinois Public Universities*. This report examined graduation and time-to-degree rates at public universities, as well as the potential factors affecting these rates.

Two information items on the July 1993 agenda analyze undergraduate student success using data from two statewide systems for monitoring undergraduate student progress that were developed as a result of the Board's policies on undergraduate education. The first report, Item #6A: *Enrollment, Transfer, and Degree Patterns of Illinois Public University Baccalaureate Recipients*, presents a retrospective study of the various enrollment patterns of baccalaureate graduates in fiscal years 1990 and 1991, using data from the public university-community college Shared Data System. The second report, Item #6B: *Public University Class of 1991 Follow-up Survey*, analyzes the responses by baccalaureate graduates of the Class of 1991 to the first common public university baccalaureate graduate follow-up survey designed to establish baseline information on the employment, further education, and satisfaction of graduates for use in program review.

In academic year 1993-94, undergraduate education reviews will focus on the undergraduate curriculum, particularly baccalaureate-level skills and general education, and on the assessment of student achievement of objectives for undergraduate education. Campus review reports on these topics will be submitted to the Board in summer 1994, after which a statewide status report will be prepared for the Board. In addition, follow-up analyses and policy recommendations on time to degree completion will be brought to the Board as part of next year's P•Q•P agenda.

Student Transfer and Program Articulation

In May 1992, the Board received a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Board's policies on student transfer and program articulation, entitled *Undergraduate Education: Transfer and Articulation*. As a result of this report, the Board asked the staff to prepare a plan for accelerating lower-division curriculum articulation among institutions across the state. The Board endorsed the staff's plan in September 1992. To implement the plan, the Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board, in conjunction with the Illinois Transfer Coordinators, launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative in January 1993. A status report on this multi-year initiative will be presented to the Board at its September 1993 meeting, with action on recommendations concluding the first phase of the Initiative anticipated in spring 1994.

Faculty Policies and Excellence in Teaching

The January 1992 report, *Undergraduate Education: Learning and Teaching*, in addition to examining curriculum reform, assessment, and student support programs, also analyzed the status of public university and community college policies and procedures that affect faculty members and

promote excellence in teaching. In September 1993, a report on faculty workload and the relationship between faculty workload and institutional productivity will be presented to the Board.

Statewide Processes

The Board's policies on improving undergraduate education also addressed the need to target resources to effect improvements:

> ...[P]lanning and resource allocation priorities at all levels should emphasize the improvement of undergraduate education and should provide incentives to improve undergraduate instruction. The Illinois Board of Higher Education will regularly examine the state-level policies and procedures for developing budget recommendations for public institutions and for program approval and review to assure that appropriate incentives are provided to institutions to improve the undergraduate educational experience.

Since their original adoption in 1986, the comprehensive set of policies on improving undergraduate education has guided the state-level processes of program approval, program review, grant allocations, and budget development. The Board has used these processes to keep the improvement of undergraduate education prominent in institutional priority setting. As a result of the policies, the Board staff also has worked with systems and campuses to develop data systems to monitor student and program success in order to inform improvement efforts. Through status reports, such as these on the July 1993 meeting agenda, and through its planning and budgeting processes, the Board has recognized institutional progress and success and has provided incentives for continued improvement.

To date, the results of system and campus efforts to improve undergraduate education have been positive. Institutional processes for program planning, program review, and resource allocation have recognized and responded to the Board's statewide priorities. Individual campuses have improved undergraduate education during the past seven years. Most campuses have reformed their general education curricula, implemented student assessment processes, experimented with new forms of student outreach and academic support services, and developed programs to recognize faculty members for excellent undergraduate teaching. In addition, an increased responsiveness by some campuses to student needs for academic support services has resulted in somewhat higher student retention and graduation rates in recent years.

Since 1986, the Board has annually recommended increased funding to implement improvements in undergraduate education identified in the program and undergraduate education review processes. In most years, however, the additional state dollars recommended were unavailable. With the launching of the P•Q•P initiative on October 1, 1991, both the Board and institutions have been called on to re-examine priorities and to target existing resources to higher priorities. Throughout the Board's committee of the whole deliberations in the ensuing eighteen months, the improvement of undergraduate education remained a high priority--from the *Guidelines for Productivity Improvements in Illinois Higher Education* (March, May, and July 1992) through the *Statewide Analysis of the Productivity of Instructional Units at Public Universities* (September 1992) and the *Staff Recommendations on Productivity Improvements at Public Universities* (October 1992) to the *Fiscal Year 1994 Higher Education Budget Recommendations: Operations and Grants* (January 1993) and the *Allocation of the Governor's Fiscal year 1994 Budget for Higher Education Operations and Grants* (March 1993).

As the P•Q•P initiative continues to develop in the coming months and through the on-going processes of program approval, program review, budget formulation, and grant allocation, the Board of Higher Education and governing boards, systems, and colleges and universities should accelerate their efforts to target resources to undergraduate education improvement.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

	At Entry	During the Undergraduate Experience	At Graduation
Establish Standards and Expectations	Institution and program admission requirements	Evaluation methods and grading standards in general education and major courses Institutional policies on Satisfactory Student Progress	Graduation requirements in: • General education • Baccalaureate-level skills • Program major • Minimum credits, grade point average and residency
Publicize Standards and Expectations	*Learning Outcomes for College-Bound Students* Dissemination of public university and community college Fall 1993 admission requirements to high school principals College and university catalogs, admission brochures, and application forms College and university admission counselors working with high school counselors College Nights and College Fairs	New-student orientation programs Academic advising Course syllabi	College and university catalogs and academic program brochures
Assist Students and Schools in Meeting Standards	School-College Partnerships Early outreach programs for at-risk and advanced students Summer bridge or transition programs Teacher preparation and in-service training High School Feedback System reports	Academic advising Honors Programs Provide guidance or assistance through: • Skills labs and tutoring programs • Mentoring programs • Supplemental sections in gate courses • Workshops on study skills, note and test taking, and time management • Career exploration and planning	Degree requirements audits for graduation
Assess and Monitor Student and Institution Performance	Admission: Combination of high school grade point average, percentile class rank, entrance exam scores (ACT/SAT), narrative evaluations (student essay and teacher/school recommendations), and courses satisfactorily completed in high school English, math, science, social studies, and other areas to predict success in freshman year Course placement: Assess basic skills in reading, writing, and math to determine appropriate course registration High School Feedback System	Assess achievement of baccalaureate skills and of objectives for general education Monitor grades and grade distributions Monitor student retention Reviews of academic programs (majors) Reviews of undergraduate education Course and instructor evaluations by students	Assess achievement of baccalaureate skills and of objectives for general education and in the major Monitor student retention to graduation and time to degree completion Follow-up studies of employment, further education, and satisfaction of graduates one, five, and ten years after graduation